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Populism in the European Union: An investigation

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Abstract

In this paper we attempt to explain the evolution of the vote share and the number of populist parties running for legislative elections in the European Union. We build a database of 276 elections since 1976 until 2018 and account for 285 populist parties of both political spectrums. We run two sets of models to show the different variables that explain the behavior of the populist vote share and the number of populist parties and a third model to assess the dynamics of both types of dependent variables.

Keywords: Populism; Right-wing; Left-wing;

1 Introduction

In recent years, populism has become a common buzzword in politics and media around the globe. The election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, the United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union and the rise of many parties deemed populist, both on the left and right of the political spectrum, in many countries in the European Union, have made the word populism a household name, even considered word of the year by the Cambridge Dictionary in 2017. Professor Cas Mudde, one of the leading scholars of populism in the world today, describes his academic work in one of his social media accounts in the following way: "Used to study fringe politics, now study mainstream politics".

We chose to focus on the European Union as it encompasses a large number of relatively advanced democracies but with significant contrasts between each other due to the existence of complex and diverse populist movements across the Union. The uniqueness of the political construct that is the EU constitutes a fascinating and intriguing target of research. The possible role of populism in the development of the european project turns it into a topic of utmost relevance.

So called populist politicians have indeed been gaining ground in Europe. By the end of 2017, out of 28 countries in the European Union, 11 have populist parties in the government. Of these 11 governments, only the Greek government has both left-wing and right-wing parties - SYRYZA and ANEL, respectively. Of the remaining 10 governments only the Estonian government has a left-wing party, with the other 9 having right-wing parties.

In total, 19 governments in the EU enjoy the parliamentary support of populist parties. In the Czech Republic, the government of center right populist party ANO 2011 and mainstream Czech Social Democratic Party enjoy parliamentary support of far-left Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia.

There are 5 governments in which mainstream parties alone are represented in the cabinet but enjoy parliamentary support of populist parties: the Danish, Croat and Lithuanian governments are supported by right-wing populist parties and the Spanish and Portuguese governments are supported in parliament by left-wing populist parties.

In total, there are currently 60 populist political parties represented in the 28 lower or single houses of parliament of European Union member states, with 36 being right-wing and 24 left-wing. Romania and Malta are the only EU member countries in which no populist parties hold any seats in the lower house of parliament.

Figures 1 and 2 show that total populist vote share is at an almost 30-year high reaching almost 30%. This growth has been boosted mostly by right-wing populist, which has been growing steadily since the turn of the millennium, while left-wing populism has also grown but at a much slower pace, experiencing a hike in support during the European Sovereign Debt Crisis.

In 1990, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the democratization of the former Eastern Block, we see a decline in support for left-wing populist and a surge in right-wing populism. The introduction of the Euro also seems to coincide with increased growth of right-wing populism.

At the number of parties level, we also see a decline in left-wing parties around 1990 and a surge in right-wing parties beginning in 2000. There is also a dip during the crisis and a recovery around 2015

Figure 1: Average Populist vote share in legislative elections - EU28

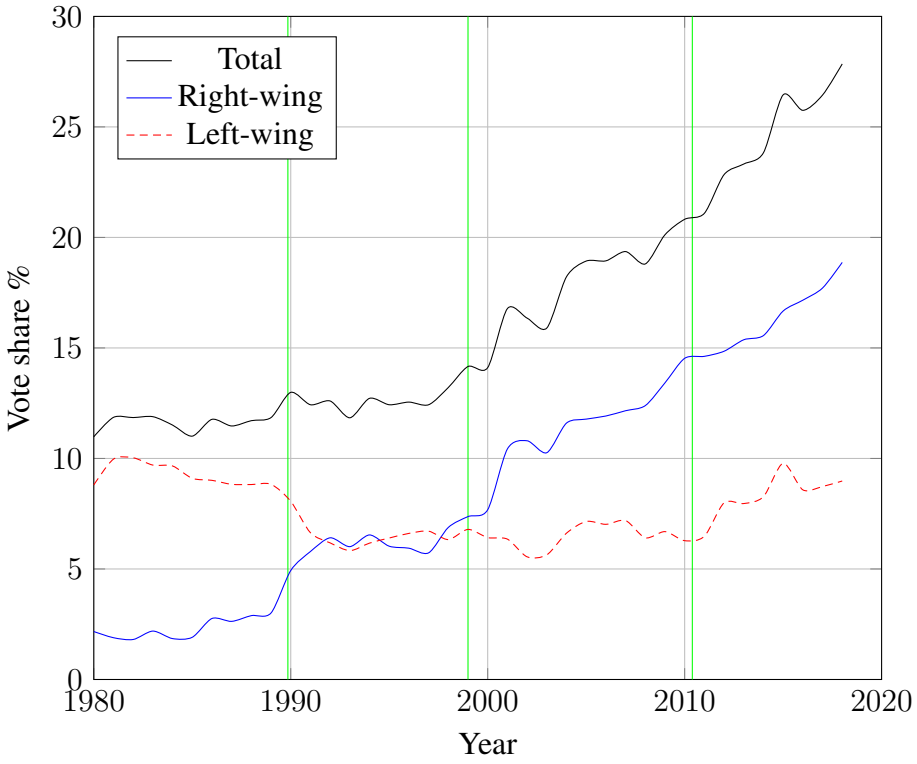
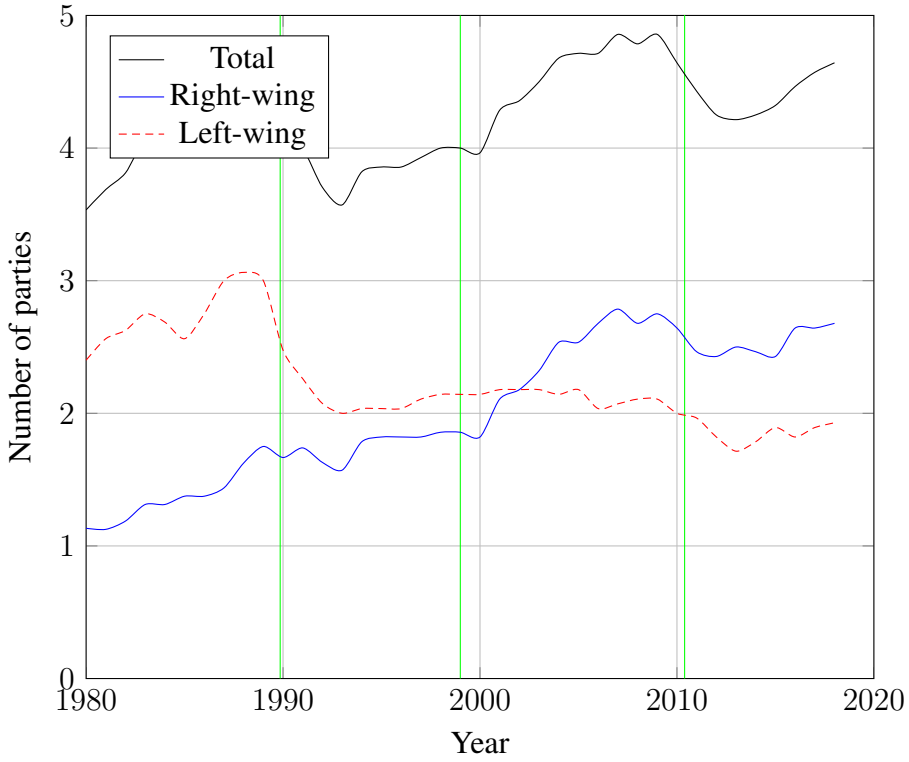


Figure 2: Average Number of populist parties running for legislative elections - EU28



Green lines: fall of the Berlin Wall, introduction of the Euro and first Greek bailout

The definition of populism is still up for debate among academics. Therefore, it is vital that a clear definition of populism is adopted in order to differ populism from commonplace demagoguery.

In this paper, we will loosely follow the ideational approach to populism. The ideational approach, according to Mudde (2004), defines populism as follows:

> ...a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus the 'corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people.

A thin-centered ideology means that populism is not a standalone ideology like Liberalism or Socialism as it lacks "intellectual refinement and consistency". As such, populism is mostly combined with other ideologies, most notably Nationalism, Socialism or Communism. Populism isn't anti-democracy either, but rather against liberal democracy. Populists value popular

will and believe in majority rule, rejecting pluralism and ignoring minorities.

However, there is some disagreement on whether populism can be considered an ideology at all. An alternative conceptualization is that of a discourse or frame (Aslanidis, 2015). Whether populism is considered a thin-centered ideology or a type of political discourse/framing, it is clear that it is mostly used to prop up another ideology. Throughout this paper, we will articulate the discourse/framing notion with the concept of "pure people" vs "corrupt elite". This definition will be key to identify the populist parties that will be included in the study.

In this study, we will explore different stories that purportedly explain the rise of populism in the European Union. These stories are modernization, economic anxiety, globalization, corruption, government, migration and terrorism.

Modernization is pointed out by the literature as one of the factors that may be behind the surge of populism (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Kriesi, 1999). This concept encompasses many aspects such as post-industrialization and the rise of post-materialist values, which are thought to generate a backlash, as the supposed losers of modernization seek political alternatives that promise to bring back the previous status quo[1].

Economic anxiety revolves around the notion that people who suffer from some sort of economic deprivation are more likely to vote for a populist party that presents, as a reason for that deprivation, the corrupt elite that bends the system against the common people. This is one of the most explored themes in Populism literature and it is also very relevant in the European context due to the economic effects of austerity programs enacted by many EU governments in the advent of the Sovereign Debt Crisis. Many populist left-wing parties ran on anti-austerity platforms during the crisis years (e.g. SYRIZA, Podemos, Anti-Austerity Alliance in Ireland).

Globalization is also seen as one of the most relevant factors explaining populism (Rodrik, 2017). Similarly to the modernization theme, it relates to the losers of Globalization, both economic and socio-cultural. Globalization in the economic side has opened competition to

[1] A prime example of this aspect comes from the presidential campaign of Donald Trump, who ran on a platform based on bringing back manufacturing jobs lost to cheap labour and unfair trading practices of foreign countries. The whole "Make America Great Again" theme is all about returning to a time when the average hard working law abiding citizen used to thrive, prior to the fast changes that shaped the post-war western society and tilted the balance in favor of the elite.

foreign goods, services and culture that somehow undermine an idealized national and cultural ideal of the past, cherished by some right-wing populists. Globalization is equally seen as a byproduct of modern capitalism, making it a target of some left-wing populists as well.

The government story is about how the government treats its citizens. An interesting aspect is, for instance, the size of the welfare state and how it interacts with demand and supply of populist policies. It is argued that a larger welfare state provides cover from populism (Swank and Betz, 2003). However, a far-reaching and universal welfare state may create division between the receivers and the non receivers. This cleavage can be exacerbated if the size of the welfare state results in a heavy tax burden.

The migration story is probably the most present in the media. Xenophobia and Racism are often present in the discourse of right-wing populists, especially since the 2015 peak of the european migration crisis. However, it is argued that Immigration size is often overblown by some sectors of the native population (Alesina, Miano and Stantcheva, 2018), which may in turn create a suitable environment for the growth of nativist and xenophobic right-wing populism.

The terrorism story is one that we want to explore as it is also often mentioned by rightwing populists in their discourse. Terrorism has been known to have political effects. After the 9/11 terror attacks, then president George W. Bush's opinion ratings skyrocketed (Gallup Inc, 2018) A similar phenomenon occurred with French president François Hollande in 2015 after the Charlie Hebdo attacks (France 24, 2015).

Being anti-elite sentiment one of the key elements of populism, we decided to include the story of corruption. Anti-corruption discourse is often employed by some parties, particularly opposition parties, new parties and parties situated on the right of the political spectrum, and has been known to result in electoral gains (Bågenholm and Charron, 2014). We want to explore if populist parties can benefit from high corruption through blaming the elite for the high level of corruption that brings down the common people.

Table 1: Summary statistics of variables

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
t_pop	276	17.35	15.18	0	72.18
r_pop	276	10.08	14.43	0	72.07
l_pop	276	7.27	9.07	0	45.19
r_larg	276	7.79	10.45	0	52.73
l_larg	276	6.43	8.42	0	37.26
t_count	276	4.26	2.58	0	13
r_count	276	2.08	1.65	0	8
l_count	276	2.18	1.72	0	8
rural_p	1316	30.7	12.98	2.04	62.03
emp_agr	756	7.99	7.39	1.01	45.21
emp_ind	756	28.17	6.3	10.98	50.07
growth	1073	2.81	3.47	-14.81	25.56
unemp	1025	8.11	4.54	.2	27.47
infl	1119	15.59	87.44	-4.48	1500
r_gdp_pc	1051	26992.01	16827.42	3834.02	111968.4
glob	1118	72.27	11.79	39.38	90.67
eco_glob	1118	61.08	20.04	16.19	93.97
soc_glob	1118	69.54	11.85	34.58	90.56
trade_glob	1118	57.94	20.06	17.59	93.15
fin_glob	1118	64.22	23.62	9.03	99.99
intper_glob	1118	70.67	14.65	28.68	97.4
cult_glob	1118	64.86	20.19	16.54	94.21
corr	863	34.04	14.78	7.07	60.54
terr_att	1316	12.93	37.88	0	308
terr_kill	1316	5.25	25.6	0	372
terr_att_pm	1316	.68	1.77	0	27.27
terr_kill_pm	1316	.27	1.78	0	52.55
govexp	1054	19.25	3.12	9.93	27.69
tax_rev	997	20.51	7.68	1.23	62.86
immig	632	8.08	7.44	.03	41.79
refug	735	2.99	6.39	0	90.16

2 Data

In this paper, we try to capture both the demand and supply of populist policies in the 28 countries that constitute the European Union. It is important to understand the difference between the factors that influence support of populism and those that influence the creation of populist movements. In order to capture the demand side of populism, we chose to analyze the vote for populist parties in legislative elections. We look into aggregate vote percentages towards all populist parties in elections for lower houses of parliament, while also analyzing right-wing and left-wing populist parties separately. When a dual system in which there is one individual electoral constituency and a national electoral constituency is in place (e.g. Hungary), we only take into account the national circle as it is a better proxy for the expression of an opinion on how the country as a whole should be governed. When a two-round system of individual constituencies is in place instead of a first-past-the-post, we take into account the aggregate vote in the first round only. We also look into how the largest populist party did on those elections using the same method.

In order to capture the supply of populism, we look into how many populist parties run for office in the same legislative elections, using the method described above. A possible caveat of this approach is that mainstream parties can also supply some populist policies, a phenomenon which we do not take into account in this study.

We use multiple sources of data for elections, with the most notable being the Global Election Database by Dawn M. Brancati (Brancati, 2007), the book *Elections in Europe: A Data Handbook* (Nohlen and Stöver, 2010) and the European Election Database organized by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data [2], which in turn draws on many sources (Budge and Klingemann, 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006; Rose and Munro, 2009; Colomer, 2008). Other sources include National Electoral Commissions, Ministries of the Interior, National Parliaments and other national online platforms dedicated to official election results.

[2]Some of the data applied in the analysis in this publication are based on material from the "European Election Database". The data are collected from original sources, prepared and made available by the NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). NSD are not responsible for the analyses/interpretation of the data presented here.

We also use multiple sources when choosing which political parties to include in the study as populist parties. The most significant is the one used by Stankov (2018), which in turn is based on the Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index 2017 (Heino, 2017). This will include more classical or orthodox far-left parties (e.g. Marxist Leninist, Trotskyist and Maoist) that may not be considered populist by some authors (Santana and Rama, 2018). We decided to consider them in this study as their are known to frame their ideology in a populist way. Some even consider their ideologies to be purely populist (Clarke, 1998; Laclau, 1977).

We believe that these parties embody the definition of populism adopted in this paper. First of all, they generally frame society as divided between the working class (the pure people) and the bourgeoisie, who owns the means of production (the corrupt elite), claiming to be the sole representatives of the working class. Secondly, even though the countries where these ideologies became dominant eventually turned into totalitarian regimes, these parties claim to support democracy, albeit of a different kind, arguing that a Socialist or a Communist societies would fulfill the ultimate will of the working class they claim to represent.

Another type of party that is sometimes not recognized as populist are radical right-wing parties (e.g. Neo-Fascist or Neo-Nazi Parties) as they are anti-democratic. However, we decided to keep them as they embody some of the characteristics of populist parties, such as anti-establishment and fostering the idea of an homogeneous group of pure people (in the racial, ethnic and/or religious sense) who need sovereignty in their homeland.

This list is also complemented by our own research, especially relating to more recent parties that have not yet been catalogued but that we believe to fulfill the definition adopted In total, we include 285 political parties throughout 276 legislative elections in the 28 countries of the European Union. The earliest election under study occurred in 1976 (Malta) and the latest occurred in October 2018 (Luxembourg). Our dataset is the most exhaustive cross country classification of populist parties, their electoral presence and outcomes, covering the all of the European Union democracies in the past four decades[3].

Regarding independent variables, we choose multiple variables that embody some of the

[3]The dataset can be accessed at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1b36S5EnczX4aDoTVAKSYyBxPDvzPc0x1

stories we mentioned above. Related to Modernization we use rural population as a percentage of total population, industrial employment and agricultural employment as a percentage of total employment.

Attached to economic anxiety, we include real GDP growth, unemployment rate and CPI inflation rate. These are the most relevant variables when assessing the performance of an economy in the short to medium term. We will also include real GDP per capita as a control for the wealth of each country.

Related to globalization, we work with the KOF *de facto* indexes of Globalization, Social Globalization, Economic Globalization, Trade Globalization, Financial Globalization, Interpersonal Globalization and Cultural Globalization (Gygli et al., 2018). The Trade Globalization index includes trade in both services and goods, as well as trading partner diversity, measured by an average of the Herfindahl-Hirschman market concentration index for exports and imports of goods. The Financial Globalization index monitors FDI, portfolio investment, international debt, international reserves and international income payments. The Interpersonal Globalization index involves international voice traffic, transfers, international tourism, international students and migration. The Cultural Globalization index is built taking into account trade in cultural goods and personal services, international trademarks registered in the country and number of McDonald's restaurants and IKEA stores.

The Economic Globalization index aggregates the previously mentioned Trade Globalization index and a Financial Globalization index, while the Social Globalization index encompasses the above mentioned Cultural Globalization index plus an Informational Globalization index and a Interpersonal Globalization index.

We represent corruption using the Bayesian Corruption Index (Standaert, 2015). For terrorism, we use the number of terrorist attacks and deaths from terrorists attacks per year in each country (both in absolute terms and in per million of inhabitants scale), retrieved from the Global Terrorism Database (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), 2018).

In government, we use total government expenditure and total tax burden, both as a percent-

age of GDP. With government expenditure, we want to capture both the weight of the government in the economy and the size of the welfare state. With the tax burden, we want to look at how many resources are asked from the economy in order to finance the government.

With migration, we use the number of immigrants and the number of refugees entering the country, per thousand inhabitants.

Sources of data, apart from the ones already mentioned, include the World Bank's World Development Indicators (World Bank, 2018) for population, immigration, refugees, real GDP growth, real GDP per capita, tax revenue, government expenditure, agricultural and industrial employment, inflation and rural population. For unemployment, we used data from the International Labour Organization (International Labour Organization, 2018).

3 Methodology

We first proceed to create a 4-year moving average for each variable. As legislatures last 4 years in most countries, we adapt the variables to capture the entire duration of the average political cycle.

We conduct the three separate studies: aggregate populist vote share and largest populist party vote share, number of populist parties and populist vote dynamics.

In the first two studies, we begin with a test of all the dependent variables against each of the independent variables, individually. The objective of this procedure is to identify the most relevant variables from each story to be included in eight proposed main regressions (five for the first study and three for the second study). We use a fixed effects method to regress the eight dependent variables with the independent variables we pretend to study. Below is an example:

$$t\_pop_{it} = t + m4\_corr_{it-1} \tag{1}$$

The total populist vote share *t_pop* is regressed with the year of the election *t*, in order to eliminate any trend behavior of the variables and the 4-year moving average of the Bayesian Corruption Index of the year prior to the election *t-1*. After this procedure for all independent

and dependent variables, we select the most relevant independent variables to be included in the proposed regressions of each study. The results of the complete individual test are reported in tables 3 and 5.

In subsection 4.1 where we study aggregate populist vote share and largest populist party vote share, we propose and perform the following model using a fixed effects panel data method:

$$D_{it} = t + l.r\_gdp\_pc_{it-1} + I_{it-1} \tag{2}$$

In the above regression, D_{it} represents one of five dependent variables (i.e. total, right-wing and left-wing populist vote share and vote share of the largest right-wing and left-wing populist parties), t stands for the year of the election and is used for excluding trend behavior from the model, $r\_gdp\_pc_{it-1}$ is the control variable 1-year lagged real GDP per capita of country i and I_{it} is the vector of 4-year moving averages of the independent variables chosen from Table 3.

The independent variables included are: real GDP growth, unemployment rate, industrial employment as a percentage of GDP, rural population as a % of total population, trade globalization, financial globalization, interpersonal globalization, cultural globalization, government expenditure, immigration per thousand inhabitants, casualties per million inhabitants from terrorist attacks and bayesian corruption index. We use a fixed effects panel data model were we include the year in order to exclude trend behavior from the model and control for real GDP per capita in the year prior to the election.

In subsection 4.2 where we study number of populist parties, we propose and test the following model using a fixed effects panel data method, using a similar method to the one displayed in equation (2):

$$D_{it} = t + l.r\_gdp\_pc_{it-1} + I_{it-1} \tag{3}$$

In the above regression, D_{it} represents one of three dependent variables (i.e. Total number of populist parties, number of right-wing populist parties and number of left-wing populist parties), t stands for the year of the election and is used for excluding trend behavior from the model, $r\_gdp\_pc_{it-1}$ is the control variable 1-year lagged real GDP per capita of country i and I_{it}

is the vector of 4-year moving averages of the independent variables chosen from Table 5.

The independent variables included are: real GDP growth, unemployment rate, agricultural employment as a percentage of GDP, industrial employment as a percentage of GDP, rural population as a percentage of total population, financial globalization, cultural globalization, government expenditure as percentage of GDP, terrorist attacks per million inhabitants and bayesian corruption index.

In subsection 4.3, we introduce a lagged dependent variable along the regressions of the first two sections in order discuss the dynamics of populist vote and the difference between political spectrums.

It results in the following type of equation:

$$D_{it} = t + l.r\_gdp\_pc_{it-1} + I_{it-1} + D_{it-y} \tag{4}$$

In the above regression, D_{it} represents one of five dependent variables (i.e. Total number of populist parties, number of right-wing populist parties and number of left-wing populist parties), t stands for the year of the election and is used for excluding trend behavior from the model, $r\_gdp\_pc_{it-1}$ is the control variable 1-year lagged real GDP per capita of country i and I_{it} is the vector of 4-year moving averages of the independent variables used in the previous two sections and D_{it-y} represents one of five lagged dependent variables (assuming previous election occurred y years before t.

4 Results

In this section, we analyze the results from the regressions proposed in the previous section. We start with the aggregate populist vote share and largest populist party vote share, followed by the number of populist parties, ending with populist vote dynamics.

Table 2: Fixed Effects Individual Regressions of vote share dependent variables

Variables	t_pop	r_pop	l_pop	r_larg	l_larg
L.r_gdp_pc	**-0.000291****	**-0.000295****	3.34e-06	**-0.000165***	3.87e-05
	(-2.295)	(-2.259)	(-0.225)	(-1.612)	(0.338)
m4_growth	-0.184	0.116	**-0.300***	0.178	-0.222
	(-0.672)	(0.460)	(-1.742)	(0.965)	(-1.378)
m4_unemp	0.172	-0.225	**0.397*****	**-0.272***	**0.300*****
	(0.805)	(-1.164)	(3.271)	(-1.878)	(2.655)
m4_infl	-0.00937	-0.00715	-0.00222	-0.00792	-0.00196
	(-0.986)	(-0.784)	(-0.387)	(-1.164)	(-0.364)
m4_emp_agr	0.0769	0.229	-0.152	0.364	-0.166
	(0.199)	(0.678)	(-0.661)	(1.353)	(-0.786)
m4_emp_ind	-0.470	0.412	**-0.882*****	0.189	**-0.789*****
	(-1.066)	(1.070)	(-3.484)	(0.611)	(-3.396)
m4_rural_p	0.232	**0.510****	**-0.278***	**0.306****	-0.181
	(1.046)	(2.593)	(-1.901)	(2.064)	(-1.339)
m4_glob	**0.310****	**0.360*****	-0.0502	**0.254****	-0.0734
	(2.073)	(2.685)	(-0.528)	(2.453)	(-0.828)
m4_eco_glob	**0.159***	**0.194****	-0.0357	**0.162*****	-0.0339
	(1.784)	(2.435)	(-0.632)	(2.646)	(-0.643)
m4_soc_glob	0.164	**0.377****	**-0.213****	**0.251****	**-0.198****
	(0.970)	(2.493)	(-2.005)	(2.155)	(-2.005)
m4_trade_glob	**0.330*****	**0.268*****	0.0621	**0.245*****	0.0675
	(3.665)	(3.277)	(1.065)	(3.931)	(1.240)
m4_fin_glob	0.00596	0.0869	**-0.0809***	0.0600	**-0.0818****
	(0.0841)	(1.363)	(-1.825)	(1.223)	(-1.979)
m4_intper_glob	-0.192	0.0182	**-0.210****	-0.0565	**-0.160***
	(-1.222)	(0.128)	(-2.138)	(-0.517)	(-1.739)
m4_cult_glob	0.0635	**0.138****	**-0.0747***	**0.0857***	**-0.0905****
	(0.896)	(2.180)	(-1.681)	(1.750)	(-2.190)
m4_govexp	-0.0726	-0.464	0.392	-0.323	0.179
	(-0.189)	(-1.308)	(1.521)	(-1.249)	(0.761)
m4_tax_rev	-0.157	-0.0990	-0.0584	-0.142	-0.0574
	(-1.018)	(-0.705)	(-0.584)	(-1.340)	(-0.611)
m4_immig	-0.295	0.0890	**-0.384***	0.214	**-0.321***
	(-1.086)	(0.439)	(-1.959)	(1.318)	(-1.862)
m4_refug	-0.297	-0.273	-0.0239	-0.226	-0.0184
	(-1.143)	(-1.151)	(-0.165)	(-1.192)	(-0.139)
m4_terr_att	0.0264	0.00161	0.0248	0.0154	0.0231
	(0.997)	(0.0677)	(1.416)	(0.864)	(1.435)
m4_terr_kill	0.0371	0.0439	-0.00682	0.0372	-0.00558
	(0.926)	(1.225)	(-0.257)	(1.385)	(-0.228)
m4_terr_att_pm	0.929*	0.630	0.299	0.555	0.270
	(1.698)	(1.280)	(0.821)	(1.507)	(0.803)
m4_terr_kill_pm	0.685	**0.956****	-0.271	**0.655***	-0.168
	(1.373)	(2.149)	(-0.818)	(1.960)	(-0.549)
m4_corr	**0.750****	0.440	**0.310***	0.101	0.230
	(2.353)	(1.489)	(1.836)	(0.440)	(1.479)

t-statistics in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 3: Fixed effects proposed regression of vote share dependent variables

Variables	(1) t_pop	(2) r_pop	(3) l_pop	(4) r_larg	(5) l_larg
m4_growth	**-0.962***	-0.446	**-0.516***	-0.253	**-0.556****
	(-1.948)	(-1.095)	(-1.735)	(-0.793)	(-2.040)
m4_unemp	0.760	0.645	0.115	0.212	0.0610
	(1.397)	(1.439)	(0.351)	(0.603)	(0.203)
m4_emp_ind	-0.479	0.831	**-1.311****	0.228	**-1.209****
	(-0.478)	(1.006)	(-2.169)	(0.352)	(-2.185)
m4_trade_glob	0.189	0.0785	0.111	0.207	0.172
	(0.642)	(0.323)	(0.624)	(1.087)	(1.055)
m4_fin_glob	0.317	0.174	0.143	0.153	0.0875
	(1.283)	(0.853)	(0.962)	(0.956)	(0.642)
m4_intper_glob	-0.762	-0.362	-0.400	-0.366	-0.297
	(-1.653)	(-0.953)	(-1.440)	(-1.230)	(-1.168)
m4_cult_glob	**-0.394***	**-0.328***	-0.0656	-0.235	-0.109
	(-1.737)	(-1.757)	(-0.480)	(-1.603)	(-0.874)
m4_govexp	0.569	-0.956	**1.525*****	-0.357	**1.462*****
	(0.683)	(-1.394)	(3.040)	(-0.664)	(3.184)
m4_immig	-0.153	0.0944	-0.247	0.113	-0.184
	(-0.387)	(0.290)	(-1.038)	(0.441)	(-0.843)
m4_terr_kill_pm	8.765	7.112	1.653	3.110	0.865
	(1.148)	(1.131)	(0.359)	(0.631)	(0.205)
m4_corr	-0.224	-0.286	0.0617	**-0.648***	0.0838
	(-0.416)	(-0.644)	(0.190)	(-1.861)	(0.282)
year	0.178	0.791	-0.613	0.400	-0.660*
	(0.270)	(1.458)	(-1.545)	(0.940)	(-1.817)
L.r_gdp_pc	0.000352	6.63e-05	0.000286	-7.08e-05	0.000299
	(0.908)	(0.207)	(1.224)	(-0.283)	(1.397)
Constant	-287.7	-1,542	1,254	-748.7	1,341*
	(-0.219)	(-1.427)	(1.587)	(-0.884)	(1.854)
Observations	120	120	120	120	120
R-squared	0.410	0.310	0.431	0.322	0.413
Number of country	27	27	27	27	27

t-statistics in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

4.1 Aggregate populist vote share and largest populist party vote share

The results for the five regressions described in the previous section are displayed in tables 2 (individual results) and 3 (proposed regression). Estimates point towards weak significance of the impact of GDP growth in the populist vote share in the individual regressions. However, the proposed regressions seem to indicate a negative impact of real GDP growth on both total and left-wing populist vote share. This result would also suggest that large recessions are likely to induce increases in populist vote share, especially the left-wing type.

A different story occurs with the unemployment rate. Individually, it displays a significant positive impact on left-wing populism, similar to what was seen in Spain and Greece, two countries that were plagued with abnormally high unemployment rates during the European Sovereign Debt Crisis, while in the proposed regression it seems cease to be significant even for left-wing populism. It is likely that being together with real GDP growth rate takes away some explanation power from it.

A decrease in industrial employment seems to discourage vote in either specification. This is a major result and indicates that deindustrialization may create space for support of left-wing populism.

Trade, financial and interpersonal globalizations seem to also lose their ”explanatory powers” when combined with the others versus when they stand individually. Cultural Globalization retains some mild significance although the coefficient sign is inverted, indicating it negatively influences both total and right-wing populism. This could be explained by the fact that more culturally globalized european countries have less populism prevalence than least globalized countries (particularly from the former eastern block). Even though the interpretation of the coefficients from the individual regressions seems more straightforward and in accordance with the literature, there are correlations between independent variables that need to be considered, which can only occur in multivariate regressions. This is a general aspect and does not concern this variable only. These coefficients show a positive influence on right-wing populism but a negative one on left-wing populism, indicating that perhaps cultural globalization makes left-wing populism less attractive while at the same time it generates a backlash and spurring

especially right-wing populism.

Government expenditure does not show up as significant individually but is included nonetheless in the proposed regression as the sole representative of the Government story. In the proposed regression it displays a surprising positive effect on left-wing populism support.

Immigration displays a negative impact on left-wing populism individually but in the proposed regression it has no impact whatsoever on the support of any sort of populism. This result could be related to idea that the size of immigration is largely overestimated by some in the native population. So while fears from immigration can lead to the support of right-wing populism, it might be that it is political speech that incentivizes that fear and not the sheer amount of immigration *per se*.

A theme that is often connected to that of immigration is that of terrorism due to the fear is creates and it is a common, though sometimes overstated, connection to immigration from Middle Eastern countries. Individually, casualties from terrorism seem to drive demand for right-wing populism, but together with the other variables it loses significance.

Finally, corruption seemed most relevant individually on total populist vote share and left-wing vote share. The reason it may only occur with broad left-wing populism support but not with the largest left-wing populist party is that the latter may be already conflated with the ”establishment”. In the proposed regression, however, it ceases to be significant for left-wing populism (though retaining the sign) but significant and positive for the support of the largest right-wing populist party

4.2 Number of populist parties

The results for the three regressions described in Section 3 are displayed in tables 4 (individual results) and 5 (proposed regression). Real GDP growth has no statistical effect on the number of populist parties arising in either specification. Individually, unemployment shows some positive significant effect on the number of left-wing populist parties but loses such significance in the proposed regression.

Inflation shows a rather odd significant negative relationship with total number of populist

Table 4: Fixed Effects Individual Regressions of number of parties dependent variables

VARIABLES	t_count	r_count	l_count
L.r_gdp_pc	1.20e-05	-1.44e-06	1.36e-05
	(0.222)	(-0.308)	(0.805)
m4_growth	**0.0776***	0.0466	0.0307
	(1.658)	(1.475)	(1.134)
m4_unemp	**0.0631***	0.0169	**0.0462****
	(1.763)	(0.692)	(2.339)
m4_infl	**-0.00463*****	**-0.00368*****	-0.000980
	(-2.936)	(-3.358)	(-1.115)
m4_emp_agr	**-0.135****	**-0.0751***	**-0.0635****
	(-2.518)	(-1.738)	(-2.436)
m4_emp_ind	**0.179*****	**0.126****	**0.0531***
	(2.952)	(2.588)	(1.768)
m4_rural_p	**0.157*****	**0.0959*****	**0.0679*****
	(4.553)	(4.061)	(3.406)
m4_glob	0.0307	**0.0362****	-0.00543
	(1.206)	(2.116)	(-0.374)
m4_eco_glob	-0.00480	0.0112	**-0.0160***
	(-0.316)	(1.093)	(-1.865)
m4_soc_glob	**0.131*****	**0.0839*****	**0.0472*****
	(4.798)	(4.523)	(2.948)
m4_trade_glob	-0.00141	0.00353	-0.00494
	(-0.0897)	(0.333)	(-0.553)
m4_fin_glob	-0.00518	0.0119	**-0.0171****
	(-0.432)	(1.478)	(-2.543)
m4_intper_glob	-0.00666	0.00866	-0.0153
	(-0.250)	(0.481)	(-1.013)
m4_cult_glob	**0.0618*****	**0.0369*****	**0.0249*****
	(5.487)	(4.778)	(3.767)
m4_govexp	**-0.247*****	**-0.128*****	**-0.122*****
	(-3.928)	(-2.884)	(-3.456)
m4_tax_rev	0.0450	0.0282	0.0181
	(1.579)	(1.483)	(1.103)
m4_immig	0.00776	-0.00276	0.0105
	(0.195)	(-0.0906)	(0.545)
m4_refug	-0.0173	-0.0252	0.00830
	(-0.479)	(-0.877)	(0.463)
m4_terr_att	**0.0112*****	0.00464	**0.00641*****
	(2.648)	(1.604)	(2.677)
m4_terr_kill	0.00369	6.50e-05	0.00349
	(0.571)	(0.0148)	(0.950)
m4_terr_att_pm	**0.212****	**0.117***	**0.0929***
	(2.409)	(1.950)	(1.851)
m4_terr_kill_pm	**-0.137***	**-0.102***	-0.0369
	(-1.704)	(-1.862)	(-0.804)
m4_corr	-0.0636	-0.0229	-0.0396
	(-1.340)	(-0.641)	(-1.592)

t-statistics in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5: Fixed effects proposed regression of the number of populist parties

Variables	(1) t_count	(2) r_count	(3) l_count
m4_growth	-0.0538	-0.0431	-0.0107
	(-0.790)	(-0.755)	(-0.327)
m4_unemp	0.0603	0.0482	0.0121
	(1.031)	(0.983)	(0.431)
m4_infl	-0.00840	0.00767	-0.0161
	(-0.366)	(0.399)	(-1.456)
m4_emp_agr	**0.209****	**0.219****	-0.00949
	(2.013)	(2.512)	(-0.190)
m4_emp_ind	**0.223***	**0.257****	-0.0333
	(1.802)	(2.471)	(-0.558)
m4_rural_p	0.0833	0.0524	0.0310
	(1.105)	(0.829)	(0.854)
m4_fin_glob	0.0185	0.00950	0.00904
	(0.711)	(0.435)	(0.720)
m4_cult_glob	**0.0740*****	**0.0593****	0.0147
	(2.717)	(2.599)	(1.122)
m4_govexp	**-0.266****	-0.130	**-0.135****
	(-2.372)	(-1.390)	(-2.510)
m4_terr_att	0.0118	0.00997	0.00179
	(1.555)	(1.574)	(0.492)
m4_corr	-0.0384	0.0337	**-0.0721****
	(-0.556)	(0.582)	(-2.171)
year	0.0553	0.112*	-0.0565
	(0.703)	(1.696)	(-1.493)
r_gdp_pc	4.74e-05	6.63e-05	-1.89e-05
	(0.834)	(1.392)	(-0.691)
Constant	-119.2	-238.7*	119.5
	(-0.746)	(-1.782)	(1.554)
Observations	145	145	145
R-squared	0.243	0.228	0.275
Number of country	28	28	28

t-statistics in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

parties and the number of right-wing populist parties. This could be partially explained by the fall in inflation in the Euro Area countries after the adoption of the common currency and after 2012, coinciding with a rise in the number of populist parties both in total and of right-wing populist type. In the proposed regression it ceases to be significant and even flips sign for the number of right-wing parties.

Both agricultural and industrial employment seem to encourage right-wing populism. It is an interesting result. It indicates that deindustrialization and, by association, modernization, discourage the creation of right-wing parties. This notion is reenforced by the individual coefficients of rural population, which are also positive.

Financial globalization loses significance with the number of left-wing populist parties when looking from the individual regression. Cultural globalization on the other hand retains its significance and positive sign with both the total number of populist parties and the number of right-wing populist parties in the proposed regression. This is more in line with the literature as it indicates a populist backlash from an increase in globalization.

Government expenditure displays only negative coefficients in both specifications, just failing to be significant with the number of right-wing populist parties in the proposed regression. This is in accordance with some literature that points out a shelter effect of government against populist, particularly through social welfare.

Neither immigration or refugees show significant coefficients in the individual regressions. It may be the case that some populists, particularly right-wing populists, do not protest high levels of immigration but immigration in any dimension, which is a feature of nativist politics.

Terrorism doesn't make it across either from the individual regressions to the proposed model, while corruption, even though it has no significance individually, becomes significant with a negative effect on left-wing populist.

4.3 Populist vote dynamics

The results for the three regressions described in Section 3 are displayed in table 6. All but one of the lagged dependent variables show a significant positive coefficient. That variable is the

lagged number of right-wing populist parties running for election.

Looking at the coefficients lagged dependent variables of vote shares, the results indicate a strong momentum with these variables. A possible interpretation is that voters are more likely to keep voting for populist parties if they have done so in the previous election. This is also consistent with the patterns seen in figures 1 to 4. The average right-wing populist vote share has risen consistently since 1980. Left-wing populist vote shares have also been climbing steadily, although at a slower pace, since the slump after the fall of the Soviet block. If former eastern block countries are excluded, both populist spectrums have been increasing their vote shares at a similar pace since the mid 1990's.

The significant coefficient in the number of left-wing populist parties and the non significant coefficient of the number of right-wing populist parties may indicate that less persistence on the right and more on the left.

5 Conclusion

Populism is probably one of the most interesting research topics nowadays in the age of Trump, Órban, and Le Pen but also SYRIZA and Podemos. It is changing the face of world politics and particularly of european politics at a time of great uncertainty regarding the european project, whose core values are being challenged by this new wave of populism.

Poor economic performance in general and the lack of protection of the population from that performance and from rapid changes in the economy can lead to popular support for populist alternatives that advocate a manichean world view that can harm the functioning of modern liberal and plural democracies.

A better scrutiny of politics, wether from the media or from academics, is vital for the maintenance of healthy democracies and for the mitigation of the fear which populists feed on. The european project also plays a part in this process and it should be reformed so that it can answer today's problems and not become part of the problem.

Table 6: Fixed effects proposed regressions with respective lagged dependent variable

VARIABLES	(1) t_pop	(2) r_pop	(3) l_pop	(4) r_larg	(5) l_larg	(6) t_count	(7) r_count	(8) l_count
m4_growth	-0.765	-0.365	-0.401	-0.202	**-0.474***	-0.00270	-0.0199	0.00454
	(-1.644)	(-0.921)	(-1.508)	(-0.656)	(-1.836)	(-0.0401)	(-0.350)	(0.138)
m4_unemp	0.609	0.451	0.212	0.193	0.0914	0.0578	0.0390	0.0258
	(1.191)	(1.019)	(0.724)	(0.568)	(0.323)	(1.000)	(0.777)	(0.909)
m4_infl						-0.00285	0.00869	-0.0119
						(-0.126)	(0.446)	(-1.074)
m4_emp_agr						0.153	**0.186****	-0.00367
						(1.493)	(2.079)	(-0.0752)
m4_emp_ind	-0.203	0.767	-0.901	0.239	**-0.986***	0.152	**0.213****	-0.0265
	(-0.215)	(0.957)	(-1.651)	(0.382)	(-1.875)	(1.243)	(2.000)	(-0.457)
m4_rural_p						0.0362	0.0444	0.00573
						(0.477)	(0.690)	(0.154)
m4_trade_glob	0.0186	0.0109	0.00781	0.136	0.0728			
	(0.0664)	(0.0457)	(0.0488)	(0.733)	(0.466)			
m4_fin_glob	0.248	0.0642	0.217	0.116	0.149	0.0127	0.00484	0.0138
	(1.070)	(0.317)	(1.624)	(0.751)	(1.146)	(0.498)	(0.216)	(1.107)
m4_intper_glob	-0.677	-0.339	-0.334	-0.377	-0.270			
	(-1.566)	(-0.918)	(-1.348)	(-1.312)	(-1.125)			
m4_cult_glob	**-0.390***	-0.252	-0.167	-0.197	-0.153	**0.0684****	**0.0580****	0.0108
	(-1.838)	(-1.373)	(-1.351)	(-1.386)	(-1.287)	(2.551)	(2.510)	(0.831)
m4_govexp	0.308	-1.027	**1.321*****	-0.473	**1.364*****	**-0.275****	-0.153	**-0.114****
	(0.393)	(-1.541)	(2.942)	(-0.909)	(3.144)	(-2.548)	(-1.633)	(-2.166)
m4_immig	-0.163	0.00317	-0.131	0.0267	-0.113			
	(-0.441)	(0.00996)	(-0.615)	(0.107)	(-0.546)			
m4_terr_att						0.00880	0.00908	0.00155
						(1.180)	(1.400)	(0.436)
m4_terr_kill_pm	6.648	6.770	-0.320	3.404	-0.356			
	(0.927)	(1.109)	(-0.0777)	(0.715)	(-0.0893)			
m4_corr	-0.0213	-0.119	0.0630	-0.545	0.0917	-0.0137	0.0318	**-0.0601***
	(-0.0419)	(-0.273)	(0.218)	(-1.610)	(0.327)	(-0.205)	(0.552)	(-1.882)
year	0.340	0.869	-0.535	0.408	**-0.599***	0.0450	0.110	-0.0543
	(0.551)	(1.648)	(-1.511)	(0.994)	(-1.746)	(0.587)	(1.651)	(-1.467)
L.r_gdp_pc	0.000393	6.23e-05	0.000339	-1.03e-05	0.000298	5.17e-06	3.30e-05	-1.75e-05
	(1.083)	(0.201)	(1.625)	(-0.0423)	(1.479)	(0.102)	(0.758)	(-0.714)
lag_t_pop	**0.310*****							
	(3.508)							
lag_r_pop		**0.256****						
		(2.433)						
lag_l_pop			**0.359*****					
			(4.661)					
lag_r_larg				**0.266****				
				(2.629)				
lag_l_larg					**0.276*****			
					(3.313)			
lag_t_count						**0.265****		
						(2.622)		
lag_r_count							0.115	
							(1.074)	
lag_l_count								**0.251****
								(2.366)
Constant	-619.0	-1,697	1,088	-764.6	1,214*	-94.51	-231.0*	113.9
	(-0.503)	(-1.616)	(1.543)	(-0.936)	(1.777)	(-0.606)	(-1.708)	(1.513)
Observations	120	120	120	120	120	145	145	145
R-squared	0.489	0.358	0.554	0.376	0.485	0.288	0.229	0.310
Number of country	27	27	27	27	27	28	28	28

t-statistics in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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6 Appendix

Figure 3: Average Populist vote share in EU28 excluding former eastern block countries

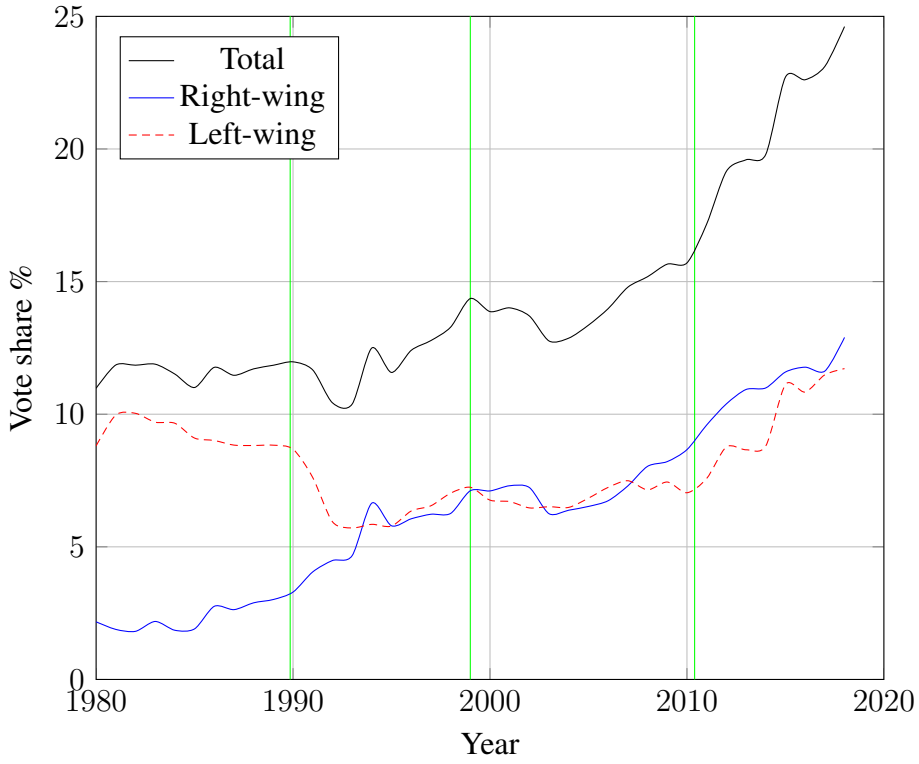

Figure 4: Average Number of populist parties running for elections in EU28 excluding former eastern block countries

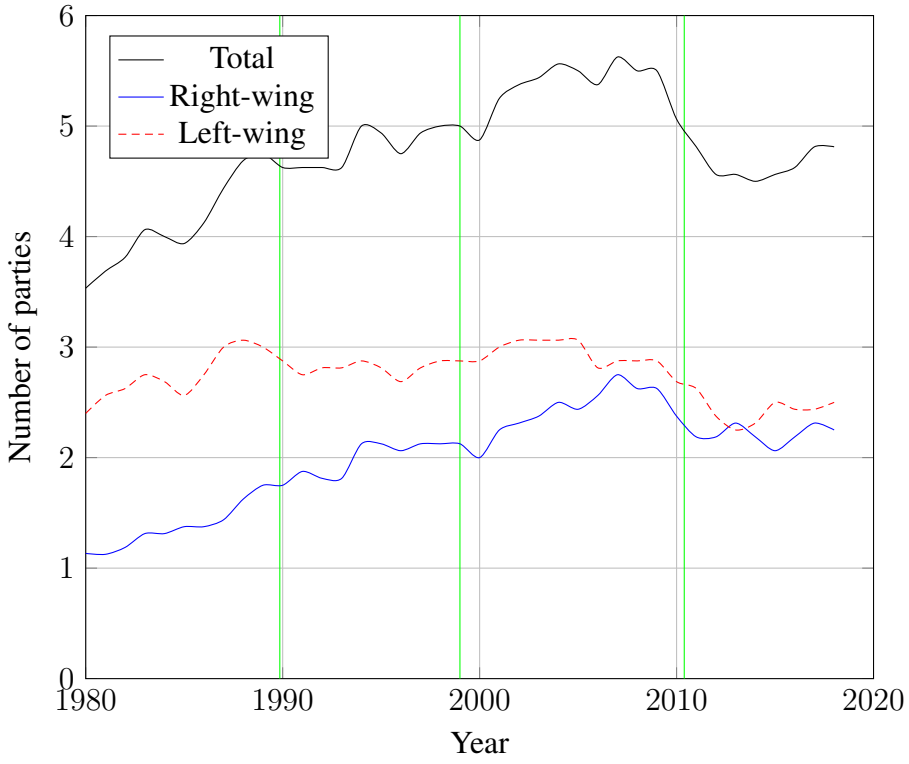

Table 7: Cross-correlation table

Variables	t_pop	r_pop	l_pop	r_larg	l_larg	t_count	r_count	l_count
rural_p	**0.222*** **	**0.141** **	**0.145** **	0.120**	0.129**	-0.058	-0.095	0.007
	(0.000)	(0.020)	(0.017)	(0.048)	(0.034)	(0.340)	(0.118)	(0.908)
emp_agr	-0.073	-0.030	-0.072	-0.050	-0.093	**-0.167** **	**-0.141** **	-0.109
	(0.303)	(0.667)	(0.307)	(0.476)	(0.188)	(0.018)	(0.045)	(0.124)
emp_ind	0.128	**0.183*** **	-0.080	**0.154** **	-0.047	**-0.183*** **	0.015	**-0.284*** **
	(0.069)	(0.009)	(0.260)	(0.029)	(0.504)	(0.009)	(0.829)	(0.000)
growth	-0.098	-0.082	-0.033	-0.063	-0.012	**-0.156** **	**-0.130** **	**-0.106** *
	(0.117)	(0.189)	(0.595)	(0.318)	(0.849)	(0.012)	(0.038)	(0.091)
unemp	**0.109** *	0.058	0.087	-0.000	0.047	**0.331*** **	**0.309*** **	**0.200*** **
	(0.081)	(0.356)	(0.165)	(0.997)	(0.449)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)
infl	-0.101	-0.051	-0.086	-0.077	-0.081	**-0.187*** **	**-0.148** **	**-0.137** **
	(0.106)	(0.416)	(0.170)	(0.221)	(0.199)	(0.003)	(0.018)	(0.028)
r_gdp_pc	-0.066	-0.011	-0.089	-0.002	-0.097	**0.152** **	**0.107** *	**0.119** *
	(0.295)	(0.863)	(0.158)	(0.973)	(0.125)	(0.016)	(0.089)	(0.058)
glob	0.091	**0.186*** **	**-0.133** **	**0.215*** **	**-0.147** **	**0.282*** **	**0.302*** **	**0.134** **
	(0.153)	(0.003)	(0.035)	(0.001)	(0.020)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.034)
eco_glob	0.019	**0.108** *	**-0.132** **	**0.143** **	**-0.106** *	**-0.219*** **	-0.044	**-0.283*** **
	(0.769)	(0.088)	(0.037)	(0.024)	(0.096)	(0.000)	(0.492)	(0.000)
soc_glob	-0.101	-0.029	**-0.118** *	0.015	**-0.120** *	0.060	0.012	0.078
	(0.112)	(0.645)	(0.063)	(0.813)	(0.058)	(0.342)	(0.851)	(0.218)
trade_glob	0.030	0.104	**-0.108** *	**0.143** **	-0.062	**-0.425*** **	**-0.177*** **	**-0.465*** **
	(0.636)	(0.100)	(0.088)	(0.024)	(0.328)	(0.000)	(0.005)	(0.000)
fin_glob	0.005	0.091	**-0.128** *	0.116	**-0.124** **	0.008	0.084	-0.067
	(0.937)	(0.151)	(0.042)	(0.068)	(0.049)	(0.904)	(0.188)	(0.292)
intper_glob	**-0.111** *	**-0.112** *	-0.010	-0.087	-0.022	0.012	-0.076	0.089
	(0.081)	(0.077)	(0.881)	(0.171)	(0.730)	(0.846)	(0.233)	(0.160)
cult_glob	**0.137** **	**0.249*** **	**-0.154** **	**0.277*** **	**-0.169*** **	**0.209*** **	**0.291*** **	0.037
	(0.030)	(0.000)	(0.015)	(0.000)	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.558)
corr	**0.375*** **	**0.327*** **	0.100	**0.250*** **	0.089	0.004	**0.191*** **	**-0.170** **
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.137)	(0.000)	(0.186)	(0.948)	(0.004)	(0.011)
terr_att	**-0.128** **	**-0.146** **	0.013	**-0.143** **	0.004	**0.478*** **	**0.306*** **	**0.422*** **
	(0.036)	(0.017)	(0.832)	(0.019)	(0.943)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
terr_kill	**-0.177*** **	**-0.144** **	-0.067	**-0.150** **	-0.065	**0.352*** **	**0.245*** **	**0.292*** **
	(0.004)	(0.018)	(0.269)	(0.013)	(0.285)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
terr_att_pm	-0.070	**-0.221*** **	**0.217*** **	**-0.224*** **	**0.220*** **	0.092	-0.099	**0.232*** **
	(0.253)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.131)	(0.105)	(0.000)
terr_kill_pm	**-0.140** **	**-0.186*** **	0.052	**-0.192*** **	0.061	**0.124** **	0.024	**0.162*** **
	(0.021)	(0.002)	(0.394)	(0.002)	(0.316)	(0.043)	(0.697)	(0.008)
govexp	0.057	**0.153** **	**-0.138** **	**0.179*** **	**-0.140** **	-0.095	0.081	**-0.222*** **
	(0.371)	(0.015)	(0.028)	(0.004)	(0.026)	(0.131)	(0.199)	(0.000)
tax_rev	-0.105	0.018	**-0.196*** **	0.033	**-0.204*** **	**-0.173*** **	**-0.183*** **	-0.083
	(0.104)	(0.784)	(0.002)	(0.607)	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.202)
immig	**-0.282*** **	**-0.259*** **	-0.057	**-0.225*** **	-0.044	-0.024	**-0.181** **	**0.141** *
	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.462)	(0.003)	(0.573)	(0.754)	(0.019)	(0.069)
refug	**-0.184** **	-0.105	**-0.137** *	-0.106	**-0.134** *	**-0.195*** **	**-0.159** **	**-0.132** *
	(0.010)	(0.145)	(0.056)	(0.141)	(0.063)	(0.007)	(0.027)	(0.067)

t-statistics in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1